



# This is an official Oklahoma Health Alert

## Network Health Update

This document will be updated as new information becomes available. The current version can always be viewed at: <https://okhan.health.ok.gov>

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Acute Disease Service (ADS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

Categories of Health Alert messages:

### Health Alert

Provides vital, time-sensitive information for a specific incident or situation; warrants immediate action or attention by health officials, laboratorians, clinicians, and members of the public and conveys the highest level of importance.

### Health Advisory

Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; contains recommendations or actionable items to be performed by public health officials, laboratorians, and/or clinicians; may not require immediate action.

### Health Update

Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate attention.

### Health Event/Service

Provides general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.

**December 17, 2019**

**OKHAN-287-2019-12-16-ADV-N**

**Reference: n/a**

### **Changes to the Oklahoma State Department of Health Animal Rabies Testing Schedule & New Rabies Submission Form**

#### Summary

Changes to animal rabies testing Effective January 1, 2020, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Public Health Laboratory (PHL) will change the daily cutoff time for

receipt and testing of animal specimens from 11:00 am to 9:00 am. Therefore, specimens must be received by 9:00 am to have results reported by 5:00 on the same day. Animal specimens received after 9:00 am will be tested the following business day. The change is being made to ensure that submitters are notified of results earlier in the day and to allow for more rapid notification to exposed persons and potential follow-up procedures for identified rabid animals or unsatisfactory specimens.

The OSDH PHL will continue to perform animal rabies testing Monday through Friday, excluding state holidays. The PHL will conduct testing at some point during weekends in which a state holiday either precedes or follows the weekend, to minimize delays in specimen testing.

Urgent test requests may occur on weekends or holidays following consultation with OSDH Acute Disease Service (ADS). Healthcare providers, veterinarians, and animal control officers are advised to consult with the ADS Epidemiologist-On-Call at (405) 271-4060 (24/7/365 availability) to determine if urgent animal rabies testing is warranted based on the bite circumstances, severity, and animal involved.

### Summary Points

- Changes to the Animal Rabies Testing will take Effect **January 1, 2020**
- Changes to the Specimen Submission Form
- Changes to the Reporting Schedule and Results

Message #: OK-HAN\_287 / Reference: n/a

Oklahoma State Department of Health / Acute Disease Service / 1000 NE 10<sup>th</sup> St, Oklahoma City, OK 73117  
405-271-4060(ph) / 405-271-6680 (fax) <http://ads.health.ok.gov>



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### Changes to rabies specimen submission form

Effective January 1, 2020, the OSDH PHL will utilize a new *Rabies Specimen Submission Form (ODH-460)*, which must accompany each specimen submitted for animal rabies testing. The new form will replace all previous versions; please, replace all prior versions of the form with this new form.

Please, note that one form is required for each submitted specimen. As always, send animal specimens via commercial carrier (not US mail) or hand-deliver to the address listed on the rabies submission form. Deliveries are accepted at the OSDH PHL 24/7; however, some carriers do not guarantee next-day delivery or will not deliver on weekends or holidays, so please check the availability of services with your respective carrier. The OSDH PHL will continue to test specimens at no charge, although specimen transport charges are the responsibility of the sender.

### Reporting of rabies test results

An OSDH Acute Disease Service (ADS) epidemiologist will contact the submitter by telephone when a specimen is positive for rabies, and when a specimen is deemed unsatisfactory for testing. An ADS epidemiologist will also contact the animal owner and other persons that had potential contact with an animal as part of a rabies exposure assessment. Results for specimens testing positive for rabies will also be mailed to submitters. Results for specimens testing negative for rabies will be faxed to the submitter or mailed when a fax number is not provided on the specimen submission form.

The *Rabies Specimen Submission Form & Packaging Instructions* are accessible at the OSDH PHL website at: [https://www.ok.gov/health/Prevention and Preparedness/Public Health Laboratory/Forms/index.html](https://www.ok.gov/health/Prevention%20and%20Preparedness/Public%20Health%20Laboratory/Forms/index.html)

## This message has been distributed to Veterinarians, Animal Control Officers, Occupational Medicine Physicians, Infection Preventionists, Emergency Departments, and State and Local Health Officials ##

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Oklahoma State Department of Health  
Creating a State of Health

# RABIES SPECIMEN SUBMISSION FORM

Oklahoma State Department of Health, Public Health Laboratory  
1000 Northeast 10th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73117-1299  
Telephone: (405) 271-5070

Lab#: (Internal Use Only)

## VETERINARIAN/AGENCY/SENDER

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
After-Hours: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
Fax: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

## OWNER OF EXPOSED ANIMAL Same as Sender

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

## ALTERNATIVE CONTACT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

## SUBMITTED ANIMAL INFORMATION

### Type:

- Dog (Breed): \_\_\_\_\_
- Cat  Bat
- Skunk  Opossum
- Raccoon  Coyote
- Cow  Horse
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Vaccination History:

- |                                       | Yes                      | No                       | Unk.                     | Date  |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Rabies                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| EEE/WEE<br><i>(horses only)</i>       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |       |
| Venezuelan EE<br><i>(horses only)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |       |
| Distemper                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |       |

### Was Animal Sick?

- No  Yes *(indicate duration/symptoms)*

### Sex:

- M  F  Spay/Neut.  Unk.

### Description:

- Potentially exposed pet/domestic animal  
 Potentially rabid animal

### Death/Euthanasia:

- Date/Time: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_AM/PM  
 Natural  Killed/Euthan.  Unknown

## EXPOSURE INFORMATION *(Required: testing not performed without this information)*

### Type:

- Human  Pet/Domestic Animal
- Bitten by an animal?  No  Yes  
Non-bite exposure?  No  Yes  
*(e.g., saliva, blood, scratch)*
- Significant potential exposure?  No  Yes  
*(e.g., bat in room with sleeping individual)*

### Location of Exposure:

- Owner's Home  Other
- Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
County: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exposed Individual Information:

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
County: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
*(List others exposed on back of form)*

Description of Incident: *(Use back of form if more space is needed)*

## SPECIMEN SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Date Shipped: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Send Report To:  Veterinarian/Agency/Sender  Owner  Both

*Complete one form per specimen. Send via commercial carrier (not US mail) or hand-deliver to address above. Deliveries accepted 24/7; however, some carriers do not guarantee next-day delivery or will not deliver at weekends or holidays, so check availability of services. Specimens received before 9 am Mon-Fri are tested/reported same day. No fee for testing. Transport charges are responsibility of sender.*

### DIRECT FLUORESCENT ANTIBODY TEST RESULT: *(Internal Use Only)*

- Rabies Virus Not Detected (Negative) Comments:  
 Rabies Virus Detected (Positive)  
 Unsatisfactory Specimen:  
 Brain decomposed, cannot rule-out presence of rabies virus  
 Brain stem not available for testing, cannot rule-out presence of rabies virus  
 Other:  
 Indeterminate, cannot rule-out presence of rabies virus; specimen referred for additional testing

Date/Time Rec'd: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ AM/PM Date/Time Reported: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ AM/PM Tested By: \_\_\_\_\_

# RABIES SPECIMEN SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

## Specimen Preparation:

- Have a qualified person euthanize and/or separate the animal head from the body or remove the brain (as needed) as soon as possible after death. Avoid damage to the brain, as it may compromise the test.  
**CAUTION:** *Because the brain, spinal cord and saliva of infected animals may contain rabies virus, only veterinarians, animal control officers, or others who have been appropriately trained (and adequately vaccinated) should euthanize animals, or remove animal heads or brains for submission for rabies testing. Fees may apply for these services.*
- Refrigerate or chill (32 and 45°F) the specimen as soon as possible after death of animal. **DO NOT FREEZE!** Freezing may damage the brain tissue and may compromise the test.
- **Acceptable** specimens:
  - **Whole animal**, if less than 12 inches long, exclusive of tail (e.g., bat, small rodent, juvenile animals)
  - **Head only**, if moderate-sized animal (e.g., dog, cat, skunk, raccoon)
  - **Intact brain**, if large animal (e.g., cow or horse); minimum tissue requirements for rabies testing are a complete transverse cross section of the brain stem and tissue from the cerebellum (or hippocampus).
- **Unacceptable** specimens:
  - Live animals (do not attempt to euthanize animals by freezing; this can be ineffective);
  - Animals euthanized by clubbing or shooting in the head;
  - Animals raised/confined to cage (hamsters, gerbils, mice, rats, rabbits, etc.);
  - Wild or domestic birds (including chickens), turtles, or other reptiles;
  - Wild rodents (mice, rats, etc.) that have **ONLY** potentially exposed other animals;
  - Fixed specimen in formalin or other preservative.

## Submission Form:

A *Rabies Submission Form* must be completed for **each specimen** submitted. **Specimens received without documented exposure information** are not routinely processed but rather are held pending contact with the submitter/owner; **this will delay testing**. Please, provide a current Fax number (as applicable) to expedite reporting of rabies test results.

## Transport of Specimens:

Preferred methods for transport of rabies specimens to the OSDH Public Health Laboratory include:

- **Overnight commercial carrier** (e.g., FedEx, UPS, or local courier service)
  - Packaging and shipping must comply with Biological Substance, Category B as indicated below.
  - Shipping charges must be paid by the sender.
  - Check for availability of next-day delivery.
  - FedEx and UPS will not deliver shipments to the OSDH on weekends or state holidays.
- **Hand-delivery**
  - Specimens may be delivered 24/7 to the address indicated on the *Rabies Specimen Submission Form*. Use the security guard station entrance on the East-side of the OSDH building (enter via Stonewall Avenue). Use the phone at the gate to summon the security guard on duty.

**Note: Do NOT** ship specimens by bus, US mail, or to arrive on a weekend unless courier can guarantee delivery.

## Packaging Specimens for Shipment:

Shipping containers and packaging materials for rabies specimens are available to county health departments and veterinarians at no charge upon request. See the *Quick Guide* instructions if using OSDH-provided boxes. Similar containers and packaging materials are acceptable provided they comply with federal regulations for shipping Biological Substance, Category B materials (see 49 CFR 173.199 at eCFR.gov and FedEx and UPS websites).

1. Drain specimen of all fluids, then place in a clear, heavy-duty, plastic bag. A bag that is closed by a double zip-lock is preferred. Use a bag that is double or triple the size of the specimen to accommodate the specimen and absorbent materials.
  - a. If the animal is infested with fleas, spray the carcass/head with tick and flea killer before placing in bag.
  - b. If the head has sharp protuberances (e.g., shattered bone, quills), wrap the head in layers of newspaper before placing it in the bag.
  - c. If submitting multiple specimens, use separate bags and label the outside of each bag and its corresponding *Rabies Specimen Submission Form* with matching identifiers (e.g., label matching bags and forms 1, 2, 3, etc.).
2. Place sufficient absorbent material (e.g., paper towels or newspapers) inside the bag with the specimen to absorb any residual blood or fluids that may collect in the bag or leak during transport.
3. Seal the bag using the zip-lock or tightly twist the top of the bag and fold it over and then secure with a rubber band or tape; the bag must be leak-proof.
4. Place the clear bag(s) containing the specimen(s) inside another bag (preferably an orange/red biohazardous bag), and then zip-lock or tightly twist the top of the bag and fold it over and seal using a rubber band or tape.
5. Place the bag containing the specimen(s) in a Styrofoam box.
6. As needed, place additional packing material, such as newspaper, to cushion the specimen(s) and to absorb leaks.
7. Place enough frozen gel packs in the inner box to ensure the specimen(s) will remain cold for at least 48 hours. Use of wet ice is not recommended but if wet ice must be used, double-bag and seal it securely to prevent leakage during shipment. **DO NOT USE DRY ICE!**
8. Close the Styrofoam box, then place the Styrofoam box inside a rigid outer container (cardboard box).
9. Place completed *Rabies Specimen Submission Form* for each specimen in a clear plastic zip-lock bag, seal and place inside the outer container.
10. Close and seal the lid to the outer container with packing tape.
11. Place "Ship-to" and "Return" address labels on the outside of the sealed container; a place for this information may be indicated on the carrier-provided documents.
12. Ensure that a diamond-shaped UN3373 (Biological Substance, Category B) label is displayed on the outside of the outer container; may be available from carrier, purchased commercially, or printed from the *Quick Guide*.
13. Place the name and a 24/7 telephone number of an emergency contact person knowledgeable about the shipment of the rabies specimen(s) on a label on outside of outer container; a place for this information may be indicated on the carrier-provided documents.
14. The package is ready to ship.

### **Testing and Reporting:**

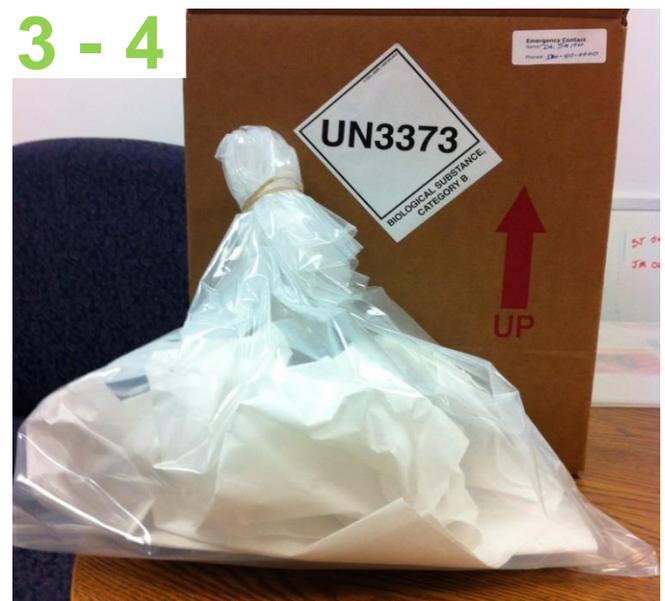
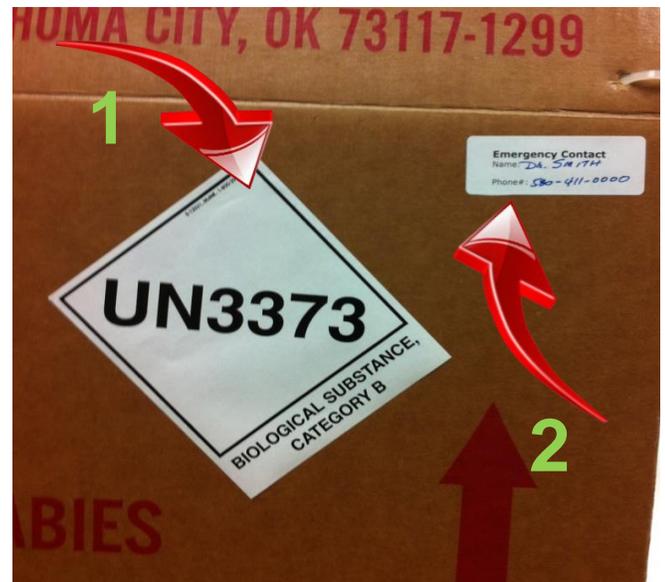
Routine testing is conducted **Monday through Friday**, excluding state holidays. Specimens received by 9:00 am are usually reported on the same day. Specimens received after 9:00 am usually are reported the next working day. Specimens received after 11 am on Fridays and weekends are not tested on the weekend but rather are tested and reported the next working day. Rabies testing also occurs on weekends when a state holiday precedes or follows the weekend. Urgent requests for testing on weekends or holidays may be made in consultation with the OSDH Acute Disease Service Epidemiologist-On-Call at (405) 271-4060 (24/7/365 availability). Approximately 1% of specimens can appear inconclusive on primary testing, requiring additional testing, which may delay reporting of results for an additional day. Rabies results may be reported by telephone, fax and/or US mail. There is no charge for testing.

### **Laboratory Contact:**

For questions concerning rabies testing, call OSDH Public Health Laboratory Client Services at 405-271-5070 from 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Monday through Friday or 405-271-4060 after regular working hours, nights, weekends and holidays.

# RABIES SPECIMEN QUICK PACKAGING GUIDE

1. Place **UN3373** and **Emergency Contact** labels on outside of outer box.
2. Write name of **emergency contact person** and **24/7 contact number** on the Emergency Contact label.
3. Drain specimen of all fluids then place in clear, heavy-duty plastic bag. If necessary, wrap specimen in newspaper to prevent sharp edges from puncturing bag. If submitting multiple specimens, place in separate bags, and label each bag with an identifier that matches the corresponding Rabies Specimen Submission Form.
4. Place supplied absorbent strip in bag with specimen then tightly seal bag using a rubber band or tape; bag must be **leak-proof**—check that it is tightly sealed.
5. Place clear bag(s) into (orange) biohazard bag and tightly seal the top of the bag using a rubber band or tape.
6. Place biohazard bag inside the inner box.



*(Continued on reverse side)*

## RABIES SPECIMEN QUICK PACKAGING GUIDE (*cont.*)

- Place sufficient frozen gel pack(s) on top of specimen bag to keep cold for 48 hours.
- Close the inner box and place the Styrofoam lid on top.
- Place the completed **Rabies Specimen Submission Form** inside a clear Ziplock bag, and set on top of the Styrofoam lid.

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- Flip the label with your facility address inside the lid of the outer box as you close the box. (If this label is blank, fill-out this label with your address so that the box can be returned to you).
- Leave the label with the address of the OSDH Public Health Laboratory visible outside the box.



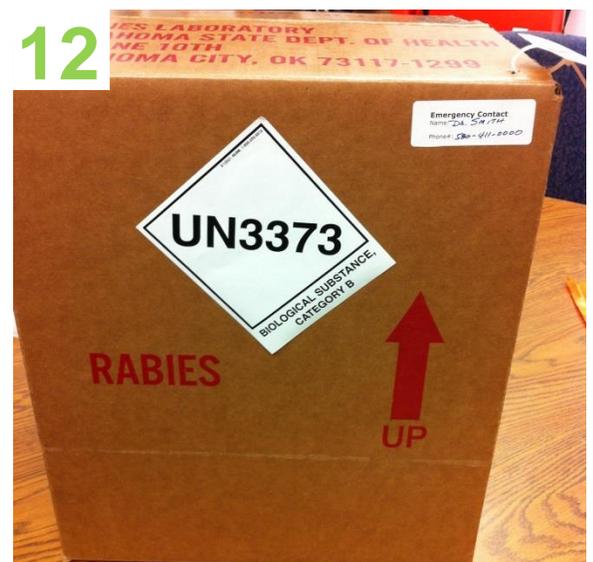
- Seal the lid of the outer box with packing tape.

- Send to:

**Oklahoma State Department of Health  
Public Health Laboratory  
1000 Northeast 10th Street  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73117-1299  
Telephone: (405) 271-5070**

Your facility will need to arrange transport and pay transport costs.

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The following **UN3373 label** is properly-sized for marking the outer package of “Biological Substance, Category B” shipments. This can be printed and firmly attached to the outer package if you do not have access to these labels.

